University of South Carolina

Carolina Core

LINGUISTICS 101
INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE

BULLETIN INFORMAITON
LING 101: Introduction to Language (3 credit hours)
Course Description:
Introduction to the human capacity for language and to how it is acquired. Investigation of language varieties, dialects, and styles. Examination of the social and geographical factors that contribute to language variation and change.

SAMPLE COURSE OVERVIEW
This course introduces students to some contemporary issues in the field of linguistics. Linguistics has many sub-fields, all of them concerned with understanding some aspect of human languages, from their biological and evolutionary roots, to the historical changes they have undergone, to the conditions under which they become threatened and die, and to the many interesting similarities and differences that the world's 6,800 or so modern languages display. However, this course will be focused on the cognitive-behavioral and socio-cultural dimensions of language, rather than on its biological, historical or typological dimensions. We will ask how languages are represented in the mind-brain (weeks 6-8), how they are acquired (weeks 3 and 4), and how they are used (weeks 9-14). This includes looking at how children acquire languages and why learning a second language as an adult is so hard; at how language is produced and understood by normal adult speakers in the course of spoken and written communication; and at the ways in which language performance breaks down due to various sorts of stresses, including brain damage. We will compare human languages with animal communication systems with a view to understanding what is unique about human verbal communication (weeks 1 and 2), and look at why it is difficult for computers to recognize speech and translate between languages (week 5). We will look at the differences between written and spoken language (week 14). Finally, we will consider the social dimensions of language, which includes looking at social and regional language variation (weeks 9 and 10), cultural issues having to do with language and identity and language and power, and at the social forces that produce language change (weeks 11-13).
No pre- or co-requisites

ITEMIZED LEARNING OUTCOMES
Upon successful completion of Linguistics 101, students will be able to:
1. Describe common linguistic misconceptions regarding what language is, how languages are learned, and how different social groups speak.
2. Characterize some major theoretical approaches for identifying, evaluating, and challenging these misconceptions.

3. Demonstrate an awareness of and appreciation for the diversity of the world's languages and of the human experiences shaped by these languages.
4. Demonstrate recognition of how, and offer explanations for why, socio-cultural processes and relationships, mediated by language practices, vary across geographical contexts.
5. Critically evaluate the ways in which languages relate to social value, prejudice, and worldview.
6. Demonstrate the ability to engage in critical, scientific thinking through the close examination of language structures and conventions, including the comparative study of linguistic structures and conventions across languages and dialects.

SAMPLE REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS
1. Napoli, Donna Jo. 2003. *Language matters: A guide to everyday questions about language.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. (addresses all learning outcomes, but especially outcomes 1-3)
2. Course packet with supplementary readings.

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS AND/OR EXAMS
1. **Six exercise sets** will be handed out over the course of the semester. Questions will be handed out a week in advance. These will consist in a selection of problems/ exercises from the textbooks/required readings, as well as ones based on some web-based resources that students will be given access to. (An alternative approach would assign students 6 mini-projects, one for each major section of the course – human versus animal communication, language acquisition, language processing, language variation, language contact, language and power). (addresses all learning outcomes but especially 2, 5 and 6)

2. Students will be required to turn in **weekly lab reports** that address that week's "Question of the day". Each lab day has been organized around a question from the assigned textbook (*Language Matters*). (An alternative approach is to require students to keep a weekly journal that is focused around that week's topic of discussion). (addresses all learning outcomes but especially 2, 5 and 6)

3. There will also be a **mid-term and a final exam**. These will consist of a variety of types of questions, including true-false questions, multiple-choice questions, data problems similar to those from the exercise sets, and answers requiring a brief paragraph or brief essay.

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS
Week 1:   Introduction (Learning outcomes 1, 2 and 6)
             What you know and don't know when you know a language (LF, Chap.1, secs.0-3)
             Language Myths, (Clark et al., chap.1)

Lab: Does language equal thought? (LM chap.3, LF, Chap.11.sec.2)

Week 2:   Animal communication (Learning outcomes 1 and 6)
             Animal communication (LF Chap.14)
             Video: Ape Genius (NOVA)
        Lab: Do animals have language? (LM chap.5)

Week 3:   First language acquisition (Learning outcomes 1-3 and 6)
             Innateness controversy
             Critical period hypothesis (Clark et al. chap.45 and postscript on Genie)
             Video: The Human Language Part 2
        Lab: How do we acquire language? (LM, chap.1)

Week 4:   Second language acquisition (Learning outcomes 1-3 and 6)
             R. Ellis, Second Language Acquisition, OUP (excerpts)
             Bilingual acquisition (LF, Chap.8, sec.5; Clark et al., chap.33)
        Lab: Why is it hard to learn a second language? Why is translation so difficult? (LM, chap.2)

Week 5:   Language and computers (Learning outcomes 1, 2 and 6)
             Speech recognition and machine translation (LF, chap.16, secs.2-4)
             M. Bates, 'Models of natural language understanding', PNAS, v.92, pp.9977–9982.
        Lab: Can computers learn language? (LM, chap.6)

Week 6:   Sign Languages (Learning outcomes 1-3 and 6)
             'Sign language' by K. Emmorey, in Clark et al. Chap. 3
             'ASL: It's not mouth stuff, its brain stuff", R. Wolomir, in Clark et al. Chap.46
        Lab: Are sign languages real languages? (LM, chap.4)

Week 7:   Language and brain (Learning outcomes 1-3 and 6)
             J. Heny, 'Brain and Language', in Clark et al., chap. 40)
             Aphasias (LF, chap.9, secs.1-2)
        Lab: What can speech errors tell us about normal speech? (V. Fromkin, The Non-Anomalous Nature of Anomalous Utterances, Language, 1971, v.47, pp. 27-52)

Week 8:   Language processing (Learning outcomes 1-3 and 6)
             Speech production & perception (LF, chap.9, secs.3-4)
        Lab: The phoneme restoration effect, the McGurk effect, and other speech perception illusions (Demos available on the web)

Week 9:   Language variation (Learning outcomes 1-6)
             Language varieties; Variation at different levels (LF, chap.10, secs.0-2)

American English dialects (Excerpts from Walt Wofram & Natalie Schilling, American English: Dialects and Variation, 2nd edition, Blackwell, 2005)

Lab: Whose speech is better? (LM, chap.7)

Week 10: Language variation (cont.) (Learning outcomes 1-6)
Regional & geographic factors (LF, chap.10, sec.3)
Social factors (LF, chap.10, sec.4)

Lab: Should the United States adopt English as our official language and overhaul our educational system accordingly? (LM, chap.11)

Week 11: Language contact (Learning outcomes 1-6)
Language contact (LF, chap. 12)
Code switching; Pidgins & Creoles (Excerpts from Donald Winford, An Introduction to Contact Linguistics, Blackwell 2002)

Lab: Why do dialects and creoles differ from standard language? (LM, chap. 8)

Week 12: Language and power (Learning outcomes 1-6)
Language & power (LF, chap.11, sec.3)
Language & gender (Excerpts from Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, Language and Gender, CUP, 2002)

Lab: Do men and women speak differently? And who cares? (LM, chap. 9)

Week 13: Language and identity (Learning outcomes 1-6)
Language & identity (LF, chap.10, sec.5)
Slang and jargon; Language censorship (Excerpts from Keith Allan and Kate Burridge, Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language, COP, 2006)

Lab: Does exposure to and use of offensive language harm children? (LM, chap.12)

Week 14: Reading & Writing (Learning outcomes 1-3 and 6)
Written versus spoken language (LF, chap. 15)
Language & literacy (Excerpts from James Paul Gee, Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses, 4th edition, Routledge, 2011)

Lab: English spelling is hard, and it makes learning to read hard. Should we do anything about it? (LM, chap. 10)

Final Exam according to University exam schedule